

VALUES

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Food (other than meat) is provided on the day of the burial by the women of the home at which the burial takes place, on the succeeding day by visiting relatives, and on the third day by village neighbours. Women neighbours, like woman relatives, often bring gifts of bark-cloth belts (*amakiba*) with which to bind up the bellies of their bereaved friends, who are all atremble and full of fear, and so support them. These belts symbolize the sympathy of friends in the fearful grief of the mourners. 'If a woman wears many belts at a burial that means that she has many friends; her passionate grief is comforted by their friendship.'¹ And neighbours, like relatives and close friends from other chiefdoms, may bring cloths which are used to wrap the corpse and bind up the bellies of the chief mourners. But these gifts of food, firewood, belts, and cloth are the limit of a neighbour's obligations; very rarely does a neighbour bring a bull to kill for the funeral feast, whereas close kinsmen and affines are obliged to provide a bull or cow for this purpose if they have one. And neighbours take virtually no share in the elaborate ritual which follows for cleansing relatives from the contagion of death, driving the thought of the deceased out of their minds, and bringing back his spirit to bless the home. Their only part is to bring small gifts of millet from which to brew the beer drunk at the close of this ritual.

At an ordinary birth there is very little ceremony and the village as a group is not concerned, though close friends will help the mother during her confinement, fetching wood and water for her, and bringing occasional gifts of cooked food; but twin births are regarded as fearful and dangerous, and an elaborate ritual is performed to cleanse relatives from the contagion which, if left untreated, is believed to lead to serious swelling of the arms, legs, and stomachs, accompanied by diarrhoea. Relatives are treated with many medicines, while village neighbours are sprinkled with one only, but their cattle, especially the cattle herded with those of the man who has begotten twins, are thought to be in danger. At one twin ritual we watched there was some discussion whether all the cattle of the age-village should be treated, or only those of the herd-group to which the father of the twins belonged. Finally it was decided that on previous occasions all the cattle of the village had been treated, and a message was sent

¹ cf. Godfrey Wilson, 'Nyakyusa Conventions of Burial', *Bantu Studies*, Vol. XIII (1939), p. 12.

● 845 to bring all the herds of the village for treatment. The father of
 783 these twins explained that neighbours would suffer less than
 621 relatives, if left untreated, but 'their legs would ache a little
 [264] because we eat with them'. And here we come to an idea which
 appears in many situations in Nyakyusa life, the idea that con-
 tagion is spread through eating together. Relatives of parents of
 twins are not thought to be in danger until they eat or drink with
 one of the parents: the ritual is performed so that they may eat
 together safely. Similarly a murderer and his relatives are thought
 to be in magical danger from the relatives of the murdered man
 only if they should eat or drink with them. So too, the bond
 between neighbours which puts them in danger from the im-
 purity of one of them is the sharing of food.

881 At the initiation and marriage of a girl, neighbours again assist
 621 and identify themselves with the principals. When she reaches
 puberty a girl is secluded, and her companions in the village—
 the girls who are her immediate juniors, for the older ones will
 have joined their husbands—keep her company. Some are her
 own younger sisters and half-sisters, others are not related at all.
 Should one girl of the village not join them she is not accused of
 witchcraft, but it is unusual for one to stay away; to do so would
 show 'pride' (*amatingo*). These companions (*abapanji*) sleep and
 eat with the 'bride' (*unsungu*)¹ and share her tasks and lessons,
 fetching firewood, making mats, learning songs, and listening to
 the instruction of 'the mothers'. They and the 'bride' go about
 together as a group and, accompanied by one or two 'mothers',
 may visit a 'bride' and her maids in another village, the two
 [572] groups competing in dancing and singing. So keen is the rivalry
 that formerly, we were told, the visits sometimes led to fighting
 between the maids and 'mothers' of each 'bride', particularly
 when the competing groups came from different chiefdoms. At
 the end of the ritual two of the maids accompany the bride to her
 [864] husband's house, and spend a few days with her there, sharing
 the attentions of her husband at night (*vide infra*, p. 87).

During her seclusion the bride avoids her father, whom she
 refers to as 'father-in-law', and she avoids also all his contem-

¹ *Unsungu* means a girl who has reached puberty but has not yet borne a child. She is usually, though not invariably, betrothed, and her 'husband' has a part in the puberty ritual. There is no exact English translation, and we think that 'bride' is the least misleading in this context.

15. THE ASSOCIATIONS OF UKULOGA AND
UKUPITA

Mwaisumo (clerk).

'Ukuloga is like ukupita but not the same. It is said that when someone is angry with you and has drunk a medicine to give him power to bewitch (*amaka ga kuloga*), he greets you and the word alone has power to bring illness. You will be very ill. 789 754

'It is said that when a woman is pregnant and walks round a person who has many medicines, one of them being a medicine *ukuloga*, she will have a miscarriage. There is no case (against the owner of the medicines). [1845]

'It is said that when the owner of pythons, or the owner of medicines, passes when food has been spread out to dry, the food will disappear. He bewitches it (*ukuloga*). It is as if he hankered after the food in his heart; it disappears and becomes less. When a python man ("he of pythons")—they speak much of python men, little of medicine men—passes cattle and hankers after milk, he bewitches the milk (*ukuloga*). It disappears. He does not throttle (*ukupita*) the cattle; no, the milk just disappears.

'It is forbidden to say of a child that it is beautiful. It is all right to a close friend but not among ordinary people. To do so is to bewitch (*ukuloga*) the child. The child will fall ill. It is forbidden to say of a cow that its udder is big. If the owner hears he says: "You are bewitching it" (*ukuloga*), meaning the milk will disappear. Everyone fears to admire children or cows in this way; if such a sign is followed by sickness or failure of milk people swear at the man who has expressed admiration, but do not bring a case.

'The work of pythons is especially to steal away the milk, to throttle (*ukupita*). It is reported that some say: "I am a witch, but I have not got a python. I do not throttle the cows." They might mean they "eat" people but do not steal milk.'

Kakugu (pagan man).

'Ukupita is to throttle (with hands round the throat).'

In reply to a question as to the further meanings of the word *ukupita*, Kakugu said: 'When my relatives are there I say: "Have you *kupita* with my wife?" But when we are alone I say: "Did you sleep with my wife?" or "Did you have intercourse with her (*gwalogwa*) 789 754 196

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has lain with the dead man's wives. A brother will approach the corpse without fear. But there is another trouble: if a man seduces his brother's wife the husband may have diarrhoea perhaps with bloody stools. Many people do not come to their fathers' funerals before the burial. And also if the father is ill, and they see he is near death, they run away, returning when he has been buried. Because it is said that a man will die if he has slept with his mother, his father's wife, and sees his father or sees the corpse, as did Jones, the son of Kisokora. He slept with his mothers in secret. When his father died (in a different village from that in which Jones lived) Jones seized his father's cattle and ran away with them. When they had buried his father he came to mourn. The women with whom he had slept told on him because he had given them syphilis.

A wife who commits adultery with her husband's son is held to be in great danger also. Mwandisi said:

If they conceal it and approach the grave both the son and the wife will die. Both are washed naked, under a waterfall. The officiant washes them together with a fowl.

QUESTION: Why the waterfall and the nakedness?

MWANDISI: The water is to take away the sickness. Being naked is so that the case may go away and you, the man, may be empty (*bwasi*) and the woman may be empty. For if such a son looks into the grave and approaches to weep, the shades and Kyala are angry and say: 'Are you a relative? How can you look into the grave? It is you who have killed him, by causing him diarrhoea.' And if the woman approaches and holds her dead husband in her arms, then she dies. Those below are angry and say: 'Is she your relative?' And she dies. But if she has committed adultery with someone who is no relation she approaches and does not fear, and the adulterer does not fear either, but approaches.

For a woman, adultery is held to be dangerous also in childbirth:

If she has had lovers, she has a difficult delivery and the child refuses to come out until she confesses. Sometimes she confesses three, then the child comes, it comes out. . . . She confesses the name and takes a bit of stick and spits on it and throws it away, and you will be surprised to see that she gives birth at once. If she is very bad she will tell you three names and throw away three sticks.

Any contact with childbirth is held to be even more dangerous to men than contact with menstruation. It also is thought to cause weakness, and it is warriors who are most affected. Traditionally,

844 behind the huts, moving inside after delivery, on to a litter of banana leaves spread for her. Her mother-in-law attends her and treats her and the new-born child with *ikipiki* medicine. She washes them in a basin made of two banana leaves, one sweet banana, one plantain, and is particularly careful to wash the infant's mouth and the mother's vagina. Powdered *ikipiki* is sprinkled in the water in the form of a cross. This is done 'that the mother and child should not have diarrhoea'. The cross is a symbol of overstepping (*kokukilyana kuno, kokukilanya kuno*, demonstrating a cross) and is made 'because heavy ones, those who are with their husbands on the bed, will come and overstep the mother and child if they are not treated'. Mother and child are also given a roasted banana with powdered *ikipiki* sprinkled on it. In bringing the *ikipiki* the husband's mother acknowledges the legitimacy of the child. 'If someone does not give a child *ikipiki* it is a bastard. It is as if the husband said: "Why do you insult your husband by committing adultery with others? Others have created this foetus; it is not mine!"'

The cord is tied with a shred of bark-cloth and then cut with a bamboo knife. 'An iron knife is taboo, it's a spear, other children will die from the spear disease (*ulukwego*); to use a spear is like killing someone.' The after-birth is buried in the banana plantation with a piece of the cord sticking up, and later the litter is burnt at the same place. 'Only officiants (*abanyago*) eat of these bananas growing over the burying place—no young person may do so for it's the banana grove of the litter.' The cord must be buried upright or 'the mother will not bear again'.

845 A delayed delivery is most commonly attributed to the woman's 775 adultery,¹ and she is pressed by the midwife to confess the name of her lover or lovers, but it is also believed that it may be due to *imindu*, that is the shades. The husband consults a diviner who indicates whether the *imindu* is on his side or that of the woman's father and the one who is thus indicated should pray. 'Sometimes the woman herself tells of a quarrel which would lead to *imindu* and then her husband or father goes to pray.'

846 Mother and child remain in confinement until the navel cord drops off, sheltered from 'heavy ones', who should not enter or even greet the mother from the doorway, and from men, to whom both mother and child are dangerous. 'Men must not see a tiny

[17] ¹ Unlike certain other Central African peoples, the Nyakyusa do not attribute difficulty in childbirth to the adultery of the husband.

845 If a woman has difficulty in labour we officiants tell her: 'Speak!
783 With whom did you commit adultery?' and the child comes down.
When she has spoken it is born. We do not give her medicine. We give
her earth.

848 QUESTION: What if an illegitimate boy dies, do you perform the
ritual with *ikipiki*?

LYANDILEKO: No, because he was a child of the long grass [i.e. illegitimate], we only treat the mother. We do not perform the ritual with the *ikipiki* of the husband. If it is a girl, and she to whom we gave earth grows up, the father [i.e. her mother's husband or, if the mother was unmarried, her father] says: 'Let the husband perform the ritual, because the cattle are mine, she is my child, and that is the custom.' If they give a child of the long grass the medicine it will die, because it is not its medicine. . . . I know about it because I give children the medicine.

There is no question about the legal rights over an illegitimate child, and Nsyani and the other men held that ritual and legal control went together. Lyandileko and Kasitile, both specialists in this field, held that traditionally, at least, the *ikipiki* could only be used for a legitimate child: to do otherwise was dangerous.

So important is this acknowledgement of legitimacy that in many Christian families, where other traditional rituals are ignored, the husband's mother still brings *ikipiki* for his child.

851 As soon as the child is born a fowl—a cock for a boy, a hen for a girl—is sent to the young wife's parents, to notify them of the birth. Then her 'mothers' come 'to keep her company' (*ukumpanja*) during her confinement, and at the end of it they take her home with them for a visit of a month or more. They bring her back to her husband, formally, with gifts of beer, food, and mats (*u:umbeka*), just as they did after the puberty ritual. We met one party, taking back a young mother to her husband, in which there were twenty-one women carrying baskets with food or pots of beer. The grandmother was happy and excited and, dancing up to greet us, she said, breathlessly: 'That's the owner of this beer [pointing to her daughter], all these pots!' The feast was unusually lavish on this occasion. Two pots of beer, two stems of bananas, a vessel of milk, and a mat, were taken by the daughter of Chief Mwaipopo when she returned to her husband after the birth of her first child, and that seems to be the ordinary standard. The husband kills a bull calf for meat for his guests, or gives them a shilling or two.

CHAPTER VI

THE RITUAL OF ABNORMAL BIRTH

- 845 TWIN birth is a fearful event to the Nyakyusa. The parents of twins, and twins themselves, are *abipasya*,¹ 'the fearful ones', felt to be very dangerous to their relatives and immediate neighbours, and to cattle, causing them to suffer from diarrhoea or purging, and swollen legs, if any contact takes place. Therefore the parents are segregated and an elaborate ritual is performed, in which a wide circle of kinsmen and neighbours and the family cattle participate. The infants are naturally segregated with their mother, but it is the danger from the parents rather than from the twins themselves that is emphasized. *Ilipasa* is commonly used to mean 'twins', 'twin birth', but it is more accurately translated as 'abnormal birth', for it is used of a child born feet foremost (*unsolola*) as well as for any multiple birth, and the same ritual is performed whatever the type of *ilipasa*.²

(a) *The events*

The ritual has four phases: first the building of temporary huts or shelters, one for each parent of the twins, in which traditionally they lived and ate, each in isolation, never raising their voices above a whisper, and each speaking only to an attendant. The woman is attended by her mother, the man by a young son or daughter. The second stage is the 'induction' (*ukwingisia*) or 'washing' (*ukusukusula*), when a ritual litter is spread for the parents and kinsmen and immediate neighbours wash their hands

¹ *Ukupasya*: to be afraid.

² *Ilipasa* or *ipasa* (pl. *ama-*): twin, twin birth, abnormal birth.

Ukupasa: to bear or beget twins or an abnormally born child.

'*Ilipasa* is of two sorts, to have two children is *ipasa* and to have one child when it comes out at birth feet foremost is *ipasa* also; they say it is a fearful child born feet foremost (*umwana muipasya ubusolola*), so in both cases they speak of *ukupasa ilipasa*.'

Abapasa ipasa: parents of twins; *ulupaso* or *ulwiho lwa ipasa*: twin ritual; *ukupasana*: to branch from one root.

We have no information on the incidence of twin births or breach delivery among the Nyakyusa, but even supposing it to be higher than in western Europe, it is still the exception, not the rule. cf. M. D. W. Jeffreys, 'Twin births among Africans', *S.A. Journal of Science*, v. 50, 4 (1953).

845●

with medicines and have their legs splashed with a scalding concoction. Visitors to this ritual bring gifts of millet which is put to soak for beer. When it is brewed the 'bringing out' (*ukusorya*) rite is celebrated. The temporary huts are burnt and a new shelter is erected in which the parents have ritual intercourse. Parents, twins, and relatives are shaved and anointed with medicated ointment, and together with their neighbours again have their legs splashed with scalding medicine, this time by the father of the twins. The children are given sausages of medicated porridge which they must eat from the ground. The parents of the twins burst out of their hut and rush towards the pasture land, the father brandishing his spears. Then all the participants snatch some of the meat of a sheep or small bull which has been killed. The rest of the meat is reserved for the fourth, and final, stage of the ritual. A mess of cooked bananas, meat, and medicine is taken by the mother of the twins into her hands, immediately after the ritual intercourse. Her husband takes some of this to bury in his father's banana grove, or to throw in the direction of his father's grave; the rest the woman takes to her own parents, to be buried in her own father's grove. She drinks beer ritually with her parents, and 'steals' things from her mother's house, then returns to meet her husband and drink beer ritually with him.

So far as our information goes¹ the form of the ritual among the Kukwe scarcely differs from that of Selya and the plain and we describe it as we saw it performed in Selya for our neighbours, Mwakobela and his wife. Mwakobela was a junior half-brother of the chief, Mwaipopo. (See Tables (a) and (b).)

12 May 1935

i. *The birth of twins.* (Record of G. and M. W.)

Twins were born about eight-thirty this morning. We visited them at 5 p.m. in company with Mwaiswelo III (linked half-brother of Mwakobela) and Kikuku, who was representing Mwaipopo. Mwaipopo is 'owner' of the ritual because he is their 'father' (i.e. their senior brother). Mwaipopo did not go, though he was quite near, at our place. We found the woman with the two new-born infants sitting outside under the bananas, accompanied by the mother who bore her, and her mother's elder sister. The men seated by the house were the father, Mwakobela (Mwaiswelo II), his half-brother Mwakalendile and four friends from near by.

¹ We did not see the full ritual in Kukwe country, but had several accounts of it.

- 845 'To-day there is no ritual, we have come to express sympathy (*ukuti ndaga*).'¹

845 The two grown sons of Mwakobela were building a little hut of
342 saplings and had finished the main structure, but had not yet
thatched it. 'She will sleep there to-night. They will put leaves on
top.' Kikuku brought a message from Mwaipopo, to whom they
had previously sent to tell him of the twin birth: 'If the hut is not
finished she may sleep in the house, I agree to that. But Mwakobela
said:

845 No, the hut is finished, she can sleep there. [To me]: To-night she will
just sleep there, then the doctor will come [it is Mwaipopo's business to
find the doctor] and will induct her (*ukummwingsya*), and then we
shall lay the litter. The woman and her mother sleep there for a month
with the twins—no others—the mother alone keeps her company (*ikum-
panja*); then the doctor will come again to bring her out (*ukunsosya*).
The ritual is in two parts, the induction and the bringing out.

They tie up the cord of the first twin to be born with a shred of
plantain bark, and of the second with a shred of sweet banana bark,
the plantain bark is a sign of seniority.

The woman may not cook while she is in the hut—it's taboo. But the
other wives cook food for her and bring it to prevent her dying of
hunger. Also her friends of the village will come with food and fire-
wood to greet her. The pot in which food is cooked for the parents of
twins must not be covered when it is on the fire, and if plantains are
cooked only the middle bunches on the stem are used, not the ends;
those at the ends are thrown away. When they are eating the wife may
not begin until the husband has received his and put some in his mouth,
then she too may eat.

845 It is wholly taboo for the mother of twins to call for anything she
784 wants. She knocks with a stick to summon the one who brings her
food. . . . If her husband wants anything he calls to his wives, it is not
taboo, but he does not shout loudly, he must be careful not to make too
great a noise, for if he shouts his children's hearts are startled and, it is
said, they will die.

Traditionally, when the mother had to leave the hut to relieve
herself, she walked backwards and hid her face with a piece of
mat, to prevent herself from looking at the front of anyone. She
avoided cows at pasture, and if she caught sight of anyone in the
distance she waved a hand to warn them to let her pass.

845 Mwaiswelo III (Mwakobela's brother) came to fetch us at ten-
May 13

¹ This phrase can imply either condolence or congratulation.

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forty-five to come and eat. 'Yesterday we just conversed, you did not eat. Now we have come to fetch you.' The mother and infants were in the little hut. Mwakobela was sitting and eating with us. They explained that of old he would not have done so. 'The people in the old days were greatly afraid—the father of twins did not meet and converse with other people, no, they were much afraid. He waited in the bananas. But since the Europeans came we do not fear. The Europeans took the twins in their arms and said: "Don't be afraid." In the old days the father of twins would take a spear and shield and dance the war-dance, and cry the war-cry, but we have dropped this custom nowadays.'

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May 14

We visited Mwakobela and found him sitting alone making a hoe-handle. His wife was in the hut with the infants, attended by her mother.

May 22

We found Mwakobela hoeing a garden for beans. He told us that the elder of the twins had died two nights ago and had been buried early yesterday morning. . . .

No one came to the infant's burial; we buried him ourselves. But had he been a big child then people would have come. The doctor has not come yet [for the induction]. I have not got the millet yet.

766

July 7

ii. *The induction (ukwingisia)*

We arrived about 11 a.m. and found Mwakobela and his brother sitting outside the house with several guests. They were cutting a hide to make thongs for tying up cattle. By noon there were present twelve men, twenty-two married women, three adolescent girls, six 'daughters-in-law' sitting apart, and a crowd of children.¹ The doctor, a middle-aged woman and a distant connection of Mwakobela, arrived about noon. With the help of Mwakobela's wives she built a fire outside and cooked a pot of medicines. The women sat round this fire chatting; the little girls built themselves a separate fire, and the small boys yet another. Tiny children were with their mothers. At two-fifteen the doctor started the washing. She took a little powdered medicine from a bamboo flask and put it into a calabash of cold water. She made

¹ The identity and kinship connections of those who participated are discussed in Chapter VIII.

● 845 the boys form a queue and bend forward, holding out their hands while she poured water over the hands of each of them. After washing, each took a mouthful of water and spat it out. They were warned not to spill it on their legs as they washed and spat. Some young men washed with the boys, and women watching shouted advice, but a number of the boys went off without taking a mouthful of water or without spitting. After the boys came the girls, and then the women and babies and some more small boys who had arrived late. We counted twenty-six boys and young men, twenty-six girls and babies, and twenty-four women washing.

Then came the splashing of legs. The doctor shredded a banana sucker to make a tail. All the company gathered round the boiling pot of medicine, and the doctor, dipping the tail into the pot, splashed the boiling liquid on to their legs. Children screamed; women hopped with the pain, but shouted to their children to come and be treated. Frightened small children were hauled back by men, women, and elder children—a full sister of the twins, about 9 years old, was dragged in yelling. Mothers were especially careful to see that their babies were splashed, and pulled up the cloths binding them to their backs, so that their legs might be exposed. Mwakobela and his brother came to be splashed but some of the young men hurried away immediately after washing, disregarding the women who shouted to them that it was taboo for them to leave before they had been splashed. The women took

[183] the whole ritual much more seriously than the men, and they were very particular to see that their children were treated. One old woman who had helped a child to wash, holding its hands, came back again to wash herself. The doctor and other women shouted that she had already washed. She replied: 'Oh, I just helped the child. Have I really finished?' The mother and remaining twin did not stir from the hut—she looked dirty and dishevelled. The doctor was elegant; she wore five brass body-rings

[301] and her body was well oiled and rouged. She organized everyone with great confidence and was treated with respect, a mat being spread for her to sit upon (no other woman had a mat), and her assistant fetching and carrying everything she required.

845 Many of the women relatives had brought gifts of millet and
431 after the treatment was over they tipped their small basketfuls into a big grain basket. Then they had a snack of roasted plantains (Mwakobela provided three stems) and went home.

23 July 1935

iii. *The bringing out (ukusanya)*

Seventeen days after the induction the 'bringing out' took place.¹ The hut had been burnt last night and a new one built in a new place. Mwakobela was inside it and when we went to greet him he only put his head out, saying: 'I am not coming out.' The doctor had slept at the homestead and a small bull had been killed yesterday evening. Mwakobela had provided it because the sheep which Mwaiteteja (his brother) had got from the hills had died. Twenty-one men were present and there were two pots of beer, of which we were given one. Mwaisumo (our clerk) left (as we had told him to do if he wished) and the men remarked: 'He is baptized, he only looks on, it's taboo for him to participate, it's taboo for him to drink the ritual beer.'

The meat was being cooked by Mwakobela's wives and the doctor was preparing the medicine. There were two lots of medicine: a fine powder (*imbandanya*) made of *kalombelo* and *itipiki*, and a rough sort (*ankata*) made of *kajinja*² and *nkuguni*. The doctor explained: 'The powder is used for smearing on the forehead to enable people to meet the parents of the twins; it is not very important, it prevents the belly swelling. It is also drunk in beer at midday, for the same purpose, by the parents of the twins, and then by all their relatives. The second medicine is used for splashing on the legs with hot water; it prevents the legs from swelling. If anyone does not come to-day and his legs or belly swell, he will come to me, the doctor, and I will put hot medicines on his legs and give him powder to drink in beer. I will not smear his forehead then, no. . . . The non-relatives have their legs splashed but do not anoint their faces or drink the medicated beer.' Mwanyoso remarked: 'Our wives often do not come. Then we take home a little of the lees of the beer for them to drink.' Thirty-six people who had not washed at the induction washed now.

From the time we arrived at 7.30 a.m. the women were busy shaving each other and all the small girls except one. She was not shaved for she was in mourning—her mother had died recently. After shaving, the women and girls washed and anointed and rouged themselves. The mother of the twins (Masobesi) was in the new hut with her surviving twin and her husband. All were

¹ It was delayed three days to oblige us, as we had another engagement.

² Kajinja gives a yellow dye used traditionally to decorate bark-cloth, and nowadays also used as a relish like curry, 'but this is a new Swahili custom'.

- 845 freshly shaved and anointed; the mother and child were also
202 rouged, and both husband and wife had on new cloths. The women explained: 'The filth is finished now', and, in answer to a question about why they shaved, they replied: 'We throw away the hair in the long grass because it is filthy.' The little girls picked up scraps of hair carefully and disposed of it in the long grass. Mwaiteteja (brother of Mwakobela) said of the shaving:

All the children, Mwakobela's and mine, boys and girls, and our wives, shave. I, Mwaiteteja, do not. Mwakobela shaved last night. At an ordinary birth only the mother shaves. Mwanyilu and other grandsons of Mwaipopo are 'just people' [i.e. not relatives for this purpose] and do not shave, but they are treated with the hot medicines.

MWANYOSO: The anointing is part of the ritual. The shaving and anointing are to show that the ritual is over. Since the birth of the twins neither the women nor the children have shaved or anointed themselves, nor we men either, but we don't anoint ourselves very much anyway. We shall all shave to-day or to-morrow, but I have shaved already because of the funeral ritual of Mwakisi which took place two days ago.

- 845 Husband and wife in the hut spoke in whispers, and not even the doctor entered: 'They fear the legs.'

The doctor ranged everyone in a rough circle and she and her assistant went round smearing the forehead of each with the powder mixed with ointment. The circle soon broke up and people came up to her of their own accord to be smeared. She just dabbed a line on the forehead of each.

Then the banana suckers were cut and frayed at the end. A regular circle was formed. Mwakobela rushed out of the hut (washed, shaved and wearing a new cloth), seized two of the suckers and dipped them in the hot medicine, and splashed it on to the circle. The people yelled and ran away, only to return. He splashed them thus two or three times and then returned to the hut. The doctor continued the splashing.

- Then Mwanyoso went up to the hut with a pruning hook and cut it open, crying: 'War has come!' Mwakobela and his wife and the child rushed out 'in the direction of Mwaipopo's place' [Mwakobela's father's home], followed by the whole crowd shouting: 'We are pure (*Tali hola*).' They ran thirty or forty yards only [77] and came back laughing and talking. Mwakobela said: 'In the old days I'd have taken a spear and shield and danced, alone!'

Two banana leaves were spread on the ground and the doctor

emptied out the two pots which had been cooking, one of meat alone, the other of meat and plantains. She and her assistant divided the meat into smallish portions. Meanwhile all the younger people gathered round and, at a sign from the doctor, fell on the meat, each trying to secure a piece. Some people even took sticks and beat their way into the seething scrimmage. 845

Then a pot of beer was brought. The doctor added powdered medicine to it and Mwakobela stirred it. All drank in turn, some from the pot directly, some dipping in little pots or cups of leaves. Mwakobela himself did not drink. Mwanyoso, Jane (Kasitile's wife) and others took beer in leaf cups for those at home.

iv. Showing him the way home.

Mwanyoso was just going off when the doctor called him back: 'You are the *abaysa*, you must show him the way home.' Mwan-yoso then called to Kasitile's son: 'Come, Kasitile, and we will show him the way home.' The doctor, the two *abaysa*, Mwakobela and four or five others walked about fifty yards in the direction of the sacred grove of the dead chief, Mwaijonga, Mwakobela's father. Then the doctor said to Mwanyoso: 'Tell him where his home is.' So Mwanyoso pointed in that direction and said: 'That is the way to your house, the house of Mwaijonga.' Then Mwakobela took a packet wrapped in banana bark from the doctor, walked a few paces in that direction, turned round and threw the packet over his shoulder towards Mwaijonga's place. It fell in the grass behind him. 'So now we have finished,' said the doctor.

Meanwhile the mother of the twins with her surviving baby, the doctor's assistant, ten other women and twenty-three children set off to her 'father's place' about a quarter of a mile distant in Kibonde, with a calabash of beer. Her father is dead and her brother, Mwaipopo (not the chief), has inherited. The women and children all sat down at the edge of the homestead while the doctor's assistant went ahead. She ranged all the relatives present, twenty in all, in a line with their backs to the oncoming party and smeared their foreheads with powder and ointment. Then Maso-jezi's party approached, walking backwards, and when they were quite close the doctor's assistant said to the people of the homestead: 'Turn round and say: "We are pure." ' They turned and shouted: 'We are pure!' laughing; and at the same time Maso-jezi's party turned too.

- 845 Then the doctor called for water, added powder to it, and took Mwaipopo, the owner of the homestead, off to the edge of the bananas, some way from the house, to wash. He scratched a hole with his hands under a banana stem, and buried a packet (just like the one thrown over his shoulder by Mwakobela) which the doctor gave him. Then she poured the water for him and he washed his hands and mouth, as the others had done at Mwakobela's place. The doctor took the mother of twins off to the edge of the swept place, some distance away, and poured water for her to wash her hands and mouth likewise. All this was quietly and seriously done.

[273] A calabash of beer was then brought out of the house, the doctor put powder in, the mother of the twins stirred it, Mwaipopo drank first, and all the others in turn. Likonyela was present and took part in all this. He took off some medicated beer to take to his sister, Kipesile, who lives in Ipande. 'She is sick and I want to go to see her, so I shall take the medicine to her myself.' I asked him why he was not at Mwakobela's (being a classificatory son of Mwakobela). He replied: 'Well, they never sent me a message, to call me, so I came here.' He and Mwaipopo, the head of this homestead, are sons of two sisters. Likonyela's wives were not here—'They are sick'; but one of his children was here carried by a younger sister of one of his wives.

Some medicated beer was also taken by a man, Kikaja, son of Nokile, a cross-cousin (*untani*). 'His father was our mother's brother.'

Then the mother of twins went into the house and took out three baskets of cooked food and one pot of beer prepared for her. Each time she took up a basket the women of the house shouted: 'Ha! The child is snatching food, that is taboo!' She also took out a little pot of ointment and one of rouge. Then she cut at a growing stem of bananas with a spear, while the women of the homestead shouted: 'The child is cutting a banana stem, it is taboo!' The stem was finally severed by a boy with a hoe—she did not cut it through. Then the women of the homestead rushed at the mother of twins and greeted her and pressed round the infant excitedly. One of them explained to me: 'We, his mothers, are greeting him [the twin], we say to him: "We have never seen you before, how are you standing up to the cold?"' They also tied little pieces of string to the twin's wrists. 'It's to greet him and break the taboo (*ko kumbonola*),' they said.

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All the women present, and Mwaipopo himself, had shaved ⁸⁴⁵ to-day.

We stayed forty minutes there and some of the food was eaten on the spot. The rest of the food, the pot of beer, and the ointment and rouge, we carried back with us to Mwakobela's. The beer was given to Mwakobela who drank it with eleven other men, his kinsmen and neighbours. The food and ointment and rouge went to the women.

26 July 1935

The women had intended to go and visit the maternal relatives ⁸⁴⁵ (*abipwa*) of the mother of twins yesterday, but her 'father' (Mwai- ⁵⁷⁴ popo) had sent a message to say: 'Do not come yet, they are all away, some in Mwandosia's country, others planting potatoes.' Mwakobela, asked about his own mother's relatives, replied: 'My own *abipwa* have all died, and even if they had not, it would be too far to go, for they lived in Kukwe country. I did not throw medicine into the grass for them, no, we never do.'

'The doctor is coming soon to sprinkle the cattle, all our herd ⁸⁴⁵ here, my cattle and my neighbours', with medicine.' There are ⁷⁸³ two herd groups in the village.

28 July 1935 (Sunday)

v. *Treating the cattle*

We were called to Mwakobela's place. He told us:

The doctor brought medicine last night, just before dark, and she said to me: 'Sprinkle the cattle yourself.' 'Perhaps it is taboo for me to do so?' I replied: 'No, not at all, you sprinkle them; I am going off to church to-morrow, to the catechumen's class.' Her elder sister is baptized already and she herself intends to be baptized. So I asked her: 'To whom shall we go for medicine then?' She replied: 'I am giving the medicine to my daughter, the wife of Mwakisisile, the son of Mwaihojo.'

When we arrived at about 1.15 p.m. Mwakobela's cattle and some others were standing round a smoky fire, as usual, during the midday hours.¹ The pot of medicine was steaming on another fire at a little distance. 'How do the cattle fall sick, if you do not treat them?' we asked. 'They purge continually. . . .'

Mwakobela's wife said: 'We should send to Mwampona and let his cattle be treated too.' Mwakobela (to us): 'Mwampona herds his cattle with Mwakikato, in a separate herd from ours';² she says they should come too; certainly when Mwampona had twins our

¹ cf. Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, p. 34.

² *op. cit.*, p. 95.

- 845 cattle went up to be treated.' (To his wife): 'All right, they shall
783 come,' and he sent off a boy with a message.

Mwampona came to inquire about the message sent to him and then went back to fetch his and Mwakikato's cattle. Six banana suckers were prepared. The cattle present were splashed by Mwakobela and two of his wives, each holding two banana tails. They were the cattle of Mwakobela himself and those of seven neighbours who herd with him. Then the other herd of the village came in (the cattle of five men) and was splashed. Mwakalobo II and Mwakikato (neighbours) both came up at the end and had their legs splashed with the remains of the medicine. They had both been splashed before—we had seen Mwakikato being splashed—so we asked: 'Why again?'

Mwakalobo II replied: 'We were a great crowd the first time, and I did not get properly splashed.' Mwakikato: 'I feel a pain.'

15 February 1937

- 845 Mwakobela and his wife told us that she had been to her mother's people (*abipwa*) after we left Isumba, but that he did not go to his *abipwa* and will not do so.

vi. *The ilibalaga*

We only saw the twin ritual enacted right through once, but the different events mentioned here were repeatedly described to us, and the ritual for Mwakobela's twins may be taken as typical. Two essential actions are, however, omitted from this account, viz. the eating of sausages of porridge from the ground and the ritual intercourse.¹ We describe these in the words of Mwakatage of the plain, a middle-aged Christian, himself the younger brother of twins, who gave a very detailed account of the whole ritual. He said that at the 'bringing out' rite, besides being smeared with medicine and splashed, children are given medicated porridge.

The women cook porridge for the children, medicated porridge, outside on the road. To this cooking and eating of porridge they only take children who are unmarried. The reason that they eat porridge is this: it is a ritual which they do so that when the parents of twins come out of their house, we may not just greet them, but that they may be one with us, we whose bellies are heavy (*tungisakuponanyaga itolo nagwe, fikuti ejeye na maswe tali banilo munda*). To eat this porridge they fashion little balls or sausages, one for each child, smear them with ointment

¹ This rite was also described by a Kukwe doctor who had just supervised it in a twin ritual.

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and stick them in the ground; then each one in turn kneels down and bites his sausage of porridge. . . . The parents of twins are still in the house, with those that accompany them. Then they kill a bull and cook most of the meat outside, because that is for everybody to snatch. But the portion of meat that is for those in the house of twins is put on the fire to cook by the doctor in their hut, for it is the meat of *ilibalaga*, that is of the most important rite. The doctor then approaches the twins' house and tells the man to come out. He obeys . . . and takes the frayed banana sucker heavy with water, and scatters the water in front, and to the sides, and all round, ending up by scattering it behind him, in the direction from which he came, then he runs back into his hut. The doctor goes into the hut too . . . he prepares a bed for the husband and wife and tells them to lie with each other, and they do so. Then he puts powdered medicine into the tiny pot of meat and bananas, which is there in the hut, lets the pot cook, and pours the contents out on to a leaf. He takes a little of this mixture and divides it into four portions, two for the man, two for the woman. Then he brings these to the parents who have had intercourse, before they have washed, while the filth is still on them. He tells the woman to take the food into her hands; she does so and smears filth on to it. Then the doctor makes two¹ little parcels, one for the man, one for the woman, and this it is that is called *ilibalaga* and is the most important element in the ritual.

After this the couple wash their hands and they eat. They eat the food, which the doctor left aside [i.e. which was not touched with soiled hands] and into which he has put a little powdered medicine. The man and his wife eat together. It is to bring them together again and let them eat together after they have been eating separately. The doctor then takes a little beer in a calabash cup and mixes it with water for them and gives it to them in the hut; they drink together there, the man and his wife. At dawn on the morrow the doctor says: 'Put on the fire some bananas and the uncooked meat left over.' He adds powdered medicine to it and it cooks, then he divides it into two portions, one for the man, one for the woman, and each portion is bundled up for the man and woman to take to their respective relatives. The doctor tells them to go each to their grandparents² with the filthy *ilibalaga* which he did up into parcels the day before. They take the parcels of meat which he did up this morning—the uncontaminated meat—and

¹ Probably four, two for each of them.

² According to Mwakatage an *ilibalaga* is taken by the father of twins to his parents and to his mother's people, and by the mother of twins to her parents and her mother's people, and at each meeting the same rite is performed. As we have seen, Mwakobela threw his *ilibalaga* in the direction of his father's grave, but did not visit any of his mother's people, and he denied that it was customary even to throw an *ilibalaga* in their direction.

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa



7. The officiant at a twin ritual anoints a child

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[Facing p. 167]

845 this is eaten by the relative who receives the *ilibalaga*, after he has buried it. He who receives the *ilibalaga* buries it, and while he is doing so he looks up country to the origin of the Nyakyusa, who moved down to the plain (MuNgonde); the officiant then tells them all to look up country.... The mother of twins meets her family and it means: 'I am all right now, I am clear, I am your friend, Kyala had bound me....' On reaching home the woman waits on the path... her husband (who has been with the *ilibalaga* to his people) likewise waits for his wife.... Then they both advance together and meet, and go into their house [not the temporary hut] and eat and drink together. This eating and drinking together means that their ritual is finished; they say: 'We have survived that rubbishy Kyala who had bound us (*tupinile kwa lyaKyala ili lya tupinile*).'¹ They eat the food which has come from their two families together, first drinking together the beer. This is the end of the twin ritual as it has always been performed. People avoid the parents of twins for they say: 'He brings disease into our family.'

845 From the time the twins are born until he meets their mother
834 ritually, intercourse with any woman is taboo to the father of twins. After the ritual he may live with the mother (though she should not conceive again until the twins are running about), but he cannot visit his other wives. Only when she has given birth again—and had a normal delivery—is he free to live with his other wives. Should he break this taboo it is believed that the wife with whom he breaks it will fall grievously ill with swelling of the legs and belly, and her father is entitled to claim a cow as damages. Some polygynists are said to circumvent the taboo in this way:

[753]

The husband will go to the father of one of his wives and will take a cow to him and say: 'I have got twins, I petition for your daughter.' Then he can take her into his house and sleep with her, but with his other wives he cannot sleep until she has borne a child. When she does so, then he goes to the fathers of his other wives, taking a bull to each, and says: 'I have had a twin birth but now it is finished, and I am taking your daughters.' If the first wife thus taken bears no child, then he must take a cow to the father of another and try with her.

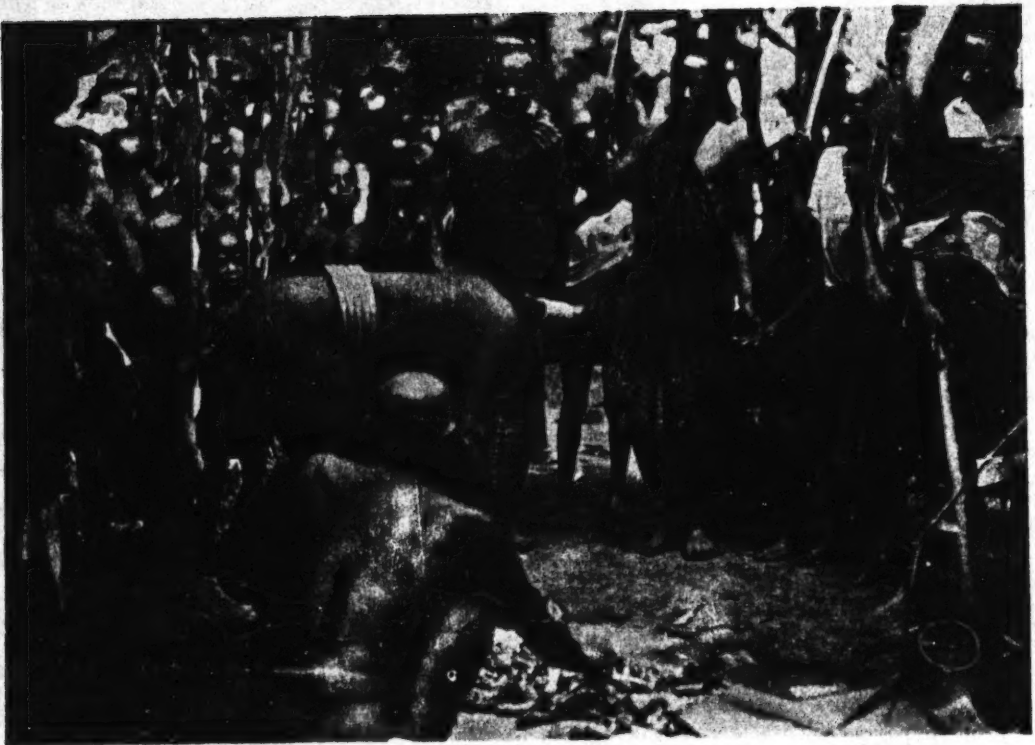
But several of our informants held that no father in his senses would permit his daughter to be taken by her husband after he had fathered twins, until the mother of twins had herself borne a normal child.

845 The isolation of the parents of twins from cattle also continues for some time. The father of twins does not milk or enter a

¹ Mwailkambo, commenting on the text, said: 'It is as if Kyala was *findu* (rubbish).' The concord implies *ifindu* not a person, as is usual with the proper name Kyala.

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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8. *Preparing the meat for the participants to snatch at a twin ritual*

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byre or strike a beast with a stick 'until the twins had grown up' 845 ●
(an elastic phrase), 'but if he has no sons to milk a doctor comes
and gives him a medicine to drink in the house, then he can milk
the cows outside. To enter the byre is altogether taboo.' He and
his attendant during his seclusion drink the milk of one cow only,
which has been specially treated. All his wives avoid milk until the
end of the ritual and the mother of twins herself 'can only begin
to clean the byre after she has borne at least one other child'—
some say two or three other children. If a cow is given her for milk
(after the end of the ritual) it is taboo for others to share that milk.
If these taboos are broken it is said that the cattle will purge and
die, or their legs will swell.

It is also taboo for a parent of twins to pass behind people—he
(or she) must always pass in front. 'They fear that if he passes be-
hind, he (the parent) will always have twins.'

Twins, and their parents who have been through the full ritual,
are thereafter immune from the danger of twin birth and may
even go in to greet a mother of twins—Mwakobela's sister, who
herself had borne twins, entered his wife's seclusion hut. There are,
however, two or three taboos which apply to twins in later life. It
is taboo for one of a pair of twin girls to get married without the 584
other. Angombwike explained:

If a man comes wooing the first he must do it secretly, and when he
speaks to her father he must do it secretly, he may bring cows but no
one knows about it; if it becomes known they say the younger might
curse herself (*ukwibuna*) and die. Then when another has come wooing
the other, secretly, the father tells them both to come wooing openly on
the same day. They come with cows. Then the father summons all his
children, and the twin girls, and tells them: 'These men have come to
marry you, do you like them?' And he asks the elder (*mbasa*): 'Which
do you like?' She chooses. Even if she chooses the man who came for her
sister he must accept, and if he tries to protest people will hush him up
at once, for it is the custom for the elder to get married first. Then the
younger (*musindaka*) says she likes the other one and their father takes
the cattle. If either one is wooed secretly before the other she must stay
quietly at home till a wooer comes for her sister. If she did not (which-
ever way it happened) the other might die. It is common knowledge in
the boys' village here that of X's twin daughters a lover has only come
for the younger, none for the elder. And so both are still unmarried.

Twins and their parents, the fearful ones (*abipaya*), and other 264
people who have been treated with medicines, eat first-fruits of 789

264 millet, beans and pumpkin with medicines. 'We fear lest the
789 medicines we have drunk will turn round in the belly';¹ and they
must be buried in a hut. 'If they are buried outside there will be
drought and famine.'

● 845 (b) *The overt purpose and symbolism*

842 The overt purpose of the twin ritual is plain to all Nyakyusa. Twin birth is thought to be contagious, causing other twin births, and also to make men and cattle ill. The ritual is to prevent this. Mwambelike, a middle-aged pagan, was explicit on the point:

People are afraid to go to the house of a man with twins. They think that they will have twins themselves if they do, and we do not like twin births; they are taboo in the country. Or perhaps their legs will swell, or their bellies, or faces, if they go to his house. So we go to a doctor and he comes and sprinkles all the people in the village, even tiny children, and all the cattle. He takes a banana stalk to burn the twin birth (*pakokya ipasa*). He burns us because of the twin birth. The water is hot and medicated. He sprinkles us all with it and when we have all been treated we say we have been burnt because of the twin birth.

753 When a man has begotten twins we are in awe of this Kyala (*tukukeba Kyala uju*). . . . If people drink out of the same vessel as the parents of twins, or if the father of twins sleeps with his other wives, this makes the disease increase, the disease of swelling legs and stomach; men catch it, the wives catch it, the children and fathers of the wives catch it. There is also a twin ceremony for cattle; if a cow drops twin calves we fear the same things. You, your wife and children drink medicines, and the cows are all sprinkled with medicine—but not your other relatives, or neighbours.

Mwakobela himself said:

If I did not wash and went to eat with my relatives, my legs would swell, I should pant and gasp. Swelling of the legs is due to our shades (*imindu gyetu*) or perhaps Kyala beneath is angry (*Kyala pasi akalele*).

845 References to Kyala as the cause of twins are frequent:

KASITILE: The shades are in twin birth, and Kyala is there—it is he who gives two children. We drive them away. Kyala and the shades are together. When we bury the *ilibalaga* in the banana grove I say: 'Kyala, leave my bellows (which means my wife) for me, you shades leave it for me.' If the shades are angry perhaps my penis is broken in copulation.

MWAIKAMBO: I have not heard people speak of the shades in twin

¹ cf. Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, p. 54.

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birth but they commonly say: 'This illness has come from Kyala, in the ritual we drive away Kyala (*tukunkaga Kyala*).'

MWANDISI (asked about the meaning of the phrase 'War has come' in relation to twin birth): It means the war of Kyala, of the twins, the illness. We bring out Kyala. Let him get out of the body, Kyala has caught hold of him, has brooded over him, has given him twins. 'Go out therefore! (*Soka panja lelo*).¹ At first he was taboo. Kyala was in the house; he could not come out. So then we bring him out, saying: 'We have fought the war there, he has come out.'

NJOBAKOSA (another elderly man—also said that the ritual was to to 'drive off Kyala'): He [the father of twins] comes out, he takes a spear and shield and runs, and we run. One snatches up a shield, and another, and another. Then we give each other beer to drink, and food, and meat, snatching it from one another; we drive off Kyala. When the father of twins comes out of the hut we say: 'You hit us!' He replies: 'I am innocent (*mwelu*, lit. white) because he has been black (*ntitu*) on account of having twins.'

MWANDISI: If the ritual is not completed [i.e. if copulation does not take place], then they go to divine. It is said: 'The shades are angry.' Are the shades not with Kyala?

ANGOMBIKE: I remember when I was a child, when I had one younger brother who was just beginning to walk, my father had twins. I remember the people sitting round the beer praying that his first ritual copulation should be successful. They began with Mbasi. 'You, Mbasi,¹ support us! (*Gwe Mbasi utwemele*). You, Kyala, support us!' Then they came to the shades. And I have heard that they always said both Mbasi and Kyala but began with Mbasi.

The parents of twins have been singled out by Kyala or Mbasi and therefore remain somewhat fearful all their lives. Angombike said:

The parent of twins (*umwipasya*) seems like a great person (*alete mundu fijo*), he is not like us, his relatives. See, he has gained two people, he is the child of Mbasi, he is with Kyala, he has seen Kyala. You know that pagans do not eat twin bananas, they fear, saying: 'These are twins (*mapasa*).¹ They give them to small children. (What I speak of is Nyakyusa custom, not the custom of the baptized.) And the parents of twins (*abipasya*) do not eat the bananas on the sides of the bunch, only those in the middle. When a girl has brought a bunch of bananas to them in the temporary hut . . . they say to her: 'Take away those at the sides,' and she takes away here one, and there one.

¹ There were hints of some special connection between the hero Mbasi and twins (*amapasa*), the elder of whom is *Mbasa*. The younger twin is *Musindeka*, the following child is *Syula*, the next *Kumba*, and the next *Kumbulu*. [262]

845 QUESTION: Why?

ANGOMBIWIKE: Because they say you are a middle one, Mbasi goes with you. We others are on the sides, you are on the open space between (*mpulo*);¹ he has drawn you apart, you are a man of Mbasi now; no one drives you away; no one makes you move aside to make way for someone who comes later. No one makes Mbasi, the fearful one (*umwipasya*), move aside; he is someone who is not moved aside.

He went on to explain that a father of twins must never move aside for a woman passing on the path; should he do so she would fall ill with swollen legs. 'The man looks at the woman and says: "I am here, I am someone, move aside," then she moves aside, she knows that he is *mwipasya*.'

Kyala creates twins, but they are not part of the natural order which he himself created. 'Kyala made us to have one child, so when we have twins it is like an illness.' Mwaikambo held that twins are both unnatural and animal-like.

The man who has borne twins we liken to an animal, because Kyala has created things so that we human beings bear just one child; it is only animals which have many young at one time. So when our fellow has twins we fear to sleep with him in the house because he is like an animal now, therefore we build for him a little hut at some distance, that his badness (*ububibi bwake*) may not move on to us. We seek a medicine for greeting him with, when he comes into the house. . . . He fears to call out because he is following the customs of animals which do not speak. . . . Snatching food is eating like animals. . . . The parents of twins avoid cattle because they are like animals which bear many cubs in a litter. And the blood in the parent of twins is much and fierce (*ililopa lya gwa ipasa lingi, kangi ikali*); it will make the cattle purge, and their legs swell.

A number of other men assented to this interpretation that twins are like animals, saying: 'Yes, it is so,' but no one else volunteered it. The feeling that twins are unnatural is general.

Part of the fearful quality of twins is their heaviness (*ubusito*), and friends and relatives drink medicines that they may be heavy also, and able to meet them.

When twins are born we drink medicine before we meet the parents, it is as if we were light, our bodies have not strength to escape their illness. So we treat ourselves with medicines that we also may be heavy in the belly, that we may have strength to escape their illness.

¹ *Umpulo*: the open swept place between lines of houses in a village.

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The *ilibalaga* is to make the mother's relatives one blood with the daughter's children. 'The food which each of the parents brings to relatives is the blood of the lineage (*lyo ilopa lya kikolo kyabo*) that they may have one body (*ukuti baje mbili gumo*). They do not look at one another when they take the *ilibalaga* because the blood [of the two lineages] has not yet met.'

The statements of two doctors, the one from Selya and the other a Kukwe, throw a little more light on the symbolism of the various actions. Mwakionde (of Selya) replied to a question about why the parents of twins only eat the middle bananas in a bunch:

Those of the sides belong to Kyala, because the twin was with Kyala; Kyala brooded over him, he came to them and gave them two children. After two days they throw away those bananas on the side, they throw them behind the huts, where they throw the rubbish of twins. . . . That means: may Mbasi be driven away when he comes to look at the children, may he be driven away to the rubbish heap behind the huts.

QUESTION: Why are the parents not allowed to call out?

MWAKIONDE: When we give each other medicines to drink? Since you have borne twins we do not meet one another. It's taboo to call out.

QUESTION: Snatching food from one another?

MWAKIONDE: They spread meat and cooked bananas on leaves of plantain and sweet banana. The doctor sprinkles powdered medicine, then we all snatch. Then the doctor gathers up the rubbish (*imindu*), those leaves, and throws them away behind the huts.

QUESTION: But why the snatching?

MWAKIONDE: If we do not snatch from one another our legs swell.

QUESTION: The running to the pasture?

MWAKIONDE: I myself have borne twins, you are my relative. When they have shaved my hair in the house, when you come with a shield to the doorway, 'Come out, Mwakionde,' you cry. 'War has come!' Then I go out. You give me the shield at the doorway. I run off with it. Another comes and snatches it, and another and another. It's to help the legs. Women do it afterwards, and then cry the war-cry. If I just meet a twin then Mbasi is angry and says: 'Why do you kill your fellow by just meeting him?' I am ill, I have diarrhoea, my legs swell, and my face swells, but sometimes the sickness returns to the parent of twins and he himself is ill.

KAKUNE (a Kukwe): In European times we do not fear; we drink medicine, that is all; but of old we feared very much. At the coming out (*ukusoka*) beer is brewed and the people and relatives drink it, and then in the night the man and wife, secluded in the hut, have intercourse,

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845 and the doctor stands outside at the door. The doctor asks: 'Is it suc-
833 cessful? [i.e. can you have intercourse with her?]' and the man says:
'No, it is not successful.' Then all we *abanyago* (priests, officiants), the
fathers of the girl who are there, and the fathers of the man, pray, in
words only [i.e. without blowing out water], saying: 'Father, support
us, Grandfather, support us, Kyala, support us, let not the ritual go on
for ever.' And then the man is able to eject, and he tells the doctor:
'It's all right now.'

845 The disease comes from the twin birth (*ilipasa*) when a couple have
753 had twins (*bapasile*). If the relatives speak with them or tread in their
footsteps when they [the relatives] are empty (*bwasi*), not having drunk
medicine, then their legs will swell up and they will have diarrhoea. No,
they do not say that the private parts will swell, only the legs. The
refusal of the seed to come is due to the shades (*imindu*). If a man has
angered his father or mother who are alive, or if they are dead and he
gives nothing to his sister, then those below, *balungu*, are angry. *Imindu*
catches hold of them and then when he begets twins he will have
trouble at the ritual.

845 The semen refuses to come also if the girl has angered her parents,
833 or if her husband has angered them. It's *imindu*. This copulation is an
essential part of the ritual. If the parents of twins do not do this and
you meet them afterwards, your legs will swell and dysentery will set
in. The fearful ones [the parents of twins] have a fire and create sick-
ness in us. We say: 'Kyala has loved [*sic*] you, he has created you so
that you bear twin children. Now we speak with you.'

845 Yes, the old people said: 'Kyala and those below.' They said those
below beg Kyala to give them two children. This was said of old,
before the Europeans came. One who has himself had twins will not
fear his relative who has twins for he says: 'I also am heavy (*ndi nsito*),
I am a fearful one, a parent of twins myself.' No one fears the twins
themselves, but their parents are feared.

The child that follows twins (*ndili*), does not anoint himself at
any later twin ritual. It is said that he finished before because he
followed twins.

When the parents of twins leave the hut they run with a lighted piece
of thatch,¹ followed by all the friends and relatives; the friends and
relatives call out: 'You hit us with fire [i.e. you give us the disease].'
They reply: 'We are pure (*tuli belu*) [i.e. we have no disease, it is
finished]. Kyala has prayed for us.'

845 And at the death of a parent of twins the relatives fear to touch the
764 corpse until the twin doctor comes and puts a medicine in the hand of
the corpse and sprinkles hot medicine on the legs of the relatives—then

¹ This was not seen or mentioned in the Seiya ritual.

THE RITUAL OF ABNORMAL BIRTH

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they take hold of the corpse. But they wait for the doctor; if they do not do so the same disease will come—a swelling of legs and diarrhoea. An ordinary corpse is not feared in this way. 845 ●
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[753]

Yes, a man fears to take his other wives. He says: 'If I just go to them I shall give them the disease of the twins that I begot with this wife.' The wife he takes without precaution will swell in the legs and stomach, and pass blood with her stools. He first tries to have a child with the wife who bore twins, waiting till the twins are walking about. He lies with the mother of the twins but withdraws, and then, when the children are grown, he impregnates her. He does not go to the other wives. And if he asks for another wife before trying to impregnate the mother of the twins her father will refuse. If he takes her without asking, her father will make him pay a cow. He can only ask for another wife if the mother of the twins does not conceive. For one month¹ the husband refrains altogether from intercourse, then after the ritual he goes to his wife (the mother of the twins) but does not impregnate her. . . . [834]
A man is supposed to tell the twin doctor before he begets another child with his wife. He must do it openly, and not in secret. It is taboo to do it secretly. Nothing happens, but the doctor is angry, saying: 'Why did you not tell me, the doctor, the owner of the body?'

Themes already familiar from the death and puberty—marriage rituals recur again here. The parents of twins are isolated and cleansed like mourners and nubile girls. Contact with them is held to be dangerous because 'those below'—in this case Kyala and Mbasi rather than the shades—have brooded over them, and must be driven off before normal procreation can be resumed. After their isolation the *ilibalaga*—the symbol of their ritual union—must be offered to the shades of both lineages, that of the man and that of the woman. There is also the eating of balls of porridge, the symbol, in the other rituals, of the actions of a madman, but the fear of madness was not adduced by our informants as the purpose of the twin ritual; rather it is the formidable potency which produces two children instead of one, that is the danger—'the parents of twins have a fire'—and men protect themselves against it by burning themselves with hot medicines. They 'burn the twin birth'. 845
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¹ Presumably longer when the seclusion and ritual lasted longer.

CHAPTER VII

RITUALS OF MISFORTUNE

- 845 An abnormal birth is the most dangerous misfortune that can befall a family in Nyakyusa society, and the ritual to ward off its expected results is the most elaborate, but there are lesser misfortunes also, which may be averted by simpler rituals.

753(a) *Cleansing after spearing*

- 682 When one man has speared another and killed him, even though the action was legitimate (as slaying an enemy in battle, or a cattle thief or an adulterer caught in *flagrante delicto*), the slayer and his relatives dare not eat together with the relatives of the slain, or enter their houses, lest they themselves, and the kinsmen of the slain also, fall ill, coughing, spitting blood, and wasting away. This sickness is known as *ulukwogo*, 'the disease of spearing'.¹ Both parties are thought to suffer primarily from contact with each other and both protect themselves by drinking medicines, but they drink separately, each engaging a doctor to treat them. We were told:

- [763] If one man kills another it does not finish. He begets children and they die; an autopsy is performed and reveals fighting with spears (*isenge*).² The disease may not injure the slayer or his children, but the relatives with whom he eats and drinks, and so also on the other side; it may not hurt the children of the dead man, but those relatives with whom his children eat and drink.

We all fell ill, especially the brothers of the slain. The murderer always remembered to drink the medicine because he knew that he had killed someone, but when your brother was slain perhaps you forgot to drink the medicine. Then, afterwards, if you drank beer with someone, not knowing that it was he who had killed your brother, you fell ill.

- 783 The manner of treatment is as follows:

If I have killed someone they take me to a waterfall and make me

¹ *Jegwaga*: a spear.

² *Ukwasenge*: to fight together with spears.

754 man. Wooden murmur but it only makes them sick themselves
775 [laughter]. But my father's sister (*unwawaga*) can murmur, she is a man
like my father. . . . If my mother is old and I do not care for her she
will murmur and fall sick herself, she will never make me sick. My
mother is no relative in my homestead, she is no relative to the shades.

However, Mwakwelebeja (a very old and conservative man) held
that 'People sometimes say: "My mother beneath is angry"
though it's not common', and Kasitile was quite positive that a
mother was also a shade with power to inflict misfortune, as the
following conversation shows:

QUESTION: What shades influence a man or woman?

KASITILE AND HIS YOUNGEST WIFE: *Imindu* of father is there, and
imindu of mother. Yes, indeed, *imindu* of mother exists. Once I had not
put beer in the house and I fell ill. The divination said: 'It is *imindu* of
your mother. She is angry not to find anything in your house.' Because
we chiefs always put beer in a little calabash in the house, it stays there
always.

QUESTION: When it goes bad?

KASITILE: We put some more. There is a little millet flour there now.
Sometimes we put flour, sometimes beer. And when I come to die they
bury beer with me. . . . Once the offering was not there, and my mother
who was dead came to look and did not find anything. Then she went
to father, who was dead, and said: 'I went to our child. His house was
without anything.' Then father said: 'Let us go and look!' They did
not find anything, then they shook me up. Then the oracle said: 'It is
the *imindu* of your mother.'

QUESTION: And a wife?

KASITILE: Both her father and her mother punish [lit. hit] her at
their place, even though she is with me, also they punish her.

QUESTION: But your shades?

KASITILE: How can they punish in-laws? They do not punish her,
but the child whom she has borne, their grandchild, him they punish.

[593] Though Kasitile and others denied that the husband's shades
could punish a wife, nevertheless she suffers from their anger
through the child, through a difficult labour, or through the beer
she brews going bad.

578 PYAGILAMO: It is said that when a woman who has quarrelled with
775 her husband is brewing beer and it goes bad, that means the shades are
angry. The shades of the husband have made the beer go bad. The
husband has murmured and the shades have heard. When a wife is

• [648] pregnant it is taboo for her to quarrel with her husband; she will have
a difficult labour. The husband murmurs and the shades hear. The

RITUALS OF MISFORTUNE

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difficult labour is from this, not from adultery. And in a case of difficult labour her husband does pray to his shades.

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[B+G] •

All were agreed that a woman is in the power of the shades of her father's lineage and if her father is angry with her, or with his son-in-law her husband, his shades afflict her, causing her to be barren or to have miscarriages, or ailing children. Hence a woman who is barren or ill, or whose children are sickly, often returns to her father's homestead so that he may pray for her, and she sleeps there on the night of the ritual, for the shades come by night. More rarely, if she has quarrelled with her father, she goes outside her husband's homestead and, facing towards her father's home, she prays herself on the pathway. But in all the cases we traced in which a woman's ancestors were believed to have made her, or her child, ill, there was a dispute between her father (or his heir) and her husband over marriage-cattle or the bull of puberty; and we were told that her father's shades 'are angry only if marriage-cattle have not been paid, and for no other reason', thus it seems that the control of her father's shades over a married woman is in fact somewhat limited.

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The characteristic illness sent by the shades is sores round the mouth, and fever—an illness which is not acute and clears up quickly. These symptoms are immediately interpreted as *inids*, affliction from the shades. Beer going sour before it is mature is also *inids*, usually thought to be caused by quarrels between husband and wife. But almost any misfortune, mild or serious, is interpreted as *inids* if members of the lineage are conscious of quarrels between themselves, or with their spouses or fathers-in-law.

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The ritual consists in the reconciliation of the living in the presence of the dead and, if the misfortune is serious, a sacrifice of flesh, fish, or fowl. The junior begs pardon of his senior who acknowledges his anger and expresses forgiveness by taking a mouthful of water from his calabash cup (*shipisi*) and blowing it out (*shisipate*) in his sacred banana grove. For the patient to recover, or the blight on crops or fish-traps to be removed, the senior *liamas* must confess his anger, and spitting, or blowing out water, is a symbol of confession and forgiveness. Mwaisumo was explicit on the matter: 'If a father is angry with his son or daughter he may say, some day: "I forgive you now" and spit on the ground: all the anger that is in him comes out like spit.' *Ukame* means both 'to

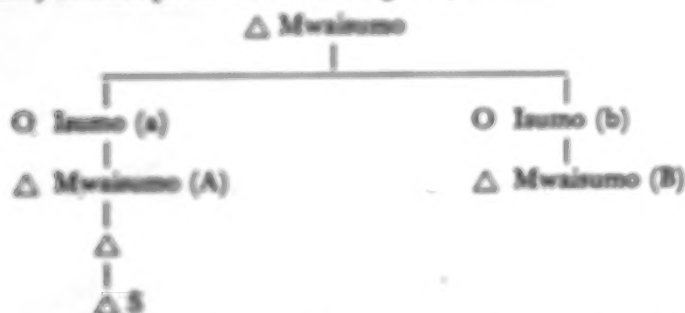
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- 764 sometimes perform the ritual, but we lack conclusive evidence.
602 One case in which a sister's daughter of the deceased man performed the ritual was recorded, but at other funerals girls in the same relationship did not. Kakune, the doctor, asserted that a boy would perform the ritual for his mother's brother for 'he is mother, the brother of mother (*je jake alilonda gwe jake*)', but in a number of cases we observed women performing the rituals for their brothers though their sons did not. A man's children may possibly perform the ritual for his sister but we traced no case of their doing so.
- 768 Those who drink the ritual beer when a widow returns to her
602 father's house after her union with the heir are her father and the men of his lineage—brothers, half-brothers, sons, and some of his brother's sons; the wives and children of these; and daughters of the lineage, her own sisters and half-sisters, and sisters of her father, but not the husbands or children of daughters of the lineage. At one *igondo* ritual we attended there were present eleven men of the lineage, eighteen daughters, and thirty-two wives, as well as numerous children (cf. genealogy, Table (e)).
- 764 When a woman has died those who come to cut the banana
513 grove and give medicated meat to her children are the *shipes*—her brother (or his heir) and his wives.
- 764 The principals at a death ritual, then, are children and grand-
602 children, parents and grandparents, spouses, and certain siblings of the deceased, together with some of their children. If a woman dies, or a widow is inherited, her agnatic kin and their wives are concerned as well.
- 845 The group which takes protective medicine after an abnormal
602 birth is larger. All the wives and children and grandchildren of the father of twins must come, his full siblings with their children and grandchildren, and the wives of his brothers, but not the husbands of his sisters; some of his half-brothers, with wives and children, some of the children of his father's brothers' sons (but not of father's brothers' daughters) and of his father's sisters' sons. On the mother's side her father, or his heirs, must take part with his wives and children, and her sisters. At the ritual for Mwakobela and his wife, previously described, we counted 156 relatives taking part, of which 24 were men, 19 boys, 33 women, 12 girls, and 35 babies (cf. genealogy, Table (a)).
- 845 When the mother of twins took the *disidaga* back to her 'father',
602 her brother (heir to her father), with his wives and children, her

THE PARTICIPANTS

sister immediately older than herself, the sister's daughter, and the sister immediately younger than herself, took part.

At the ritual of spearing, the principals are the children and grandchildren of the slayer and the slain, their brothers, their mother's kin (*shijwa*) and their wives. We were not able to watch any case of treatment against *shijwa* and are not certain exactly how far the infection is thought to spread. Our informants were agreed that the number of kinsmen concerned is less than in a twin ritual, but we traced one case in which a minor chief, Mwaisumo (B.), forbade the father of a man who had killed S., the great grandson of Mwaisumo's mother's sister, to enter his country lest he spread disease among his relatives.



At a ritual to 'rot the ropes' those concerned are the descendants of the one who has been bound and their wives, siblings and siblings' children. At the one ritual we saw there were present 27 members of the dead man's own lineage (3 sons, 2 younger half-brothers, 1 full sister, 4 half-sisters, 3 sons, 5 daughters, 2 grandsons, 7 granddaughters), one wife, the wives of 4 sons, one father's sister's son, one son and 6 daughters of his sisters or half-sisters.

The ritual for protection against sorcery which we attended was performed at the home of the senior brother (heir to his father) of the dead woman. There were present her two brothers, their wives and children; her father's brother's daughter; two wives and one daughter of her sister's sons; her mother, two of her mother's brothers with their wives and children; two of her mother's sisters and the daughters of one of them. Her husband (who lived next door) could not take the medicine at his in-law's house, but some was sent for him to use at his home with his wives and kinsfolk.

In the simple ritual of prayer to the shades the senior kinsman who offers the prayer and blows out water acts alone but, if there

782 has been a quarrel in the family, those members of the lineage
602 who have been at variance must attend and share the meat or
beer, and bless one another. Grandchildren, 'comrades of the
shades', must eat the offering left overnight in the banana grove.

593 If a son has quarrelled with his father and comes to beg pardon
621 the father calls his neighbours who must be present and partake of a
783 feast and bless the young men. 'If father and son just agree with
one another and people do not eat anything, then the son will not
be settled in well.'

585 At a puberty-marriage ritual the principals are the nubile girl
881 and her father or brother, her husband, and sometimes her mother
602 or mother-in-law. A mother goes through the ritual with her
eldest son's wife, or with her eldest daughter, if she is initiated at
infant.

764 Besides these principals who undergo the full ritual there are
602 many minor actors. At a funeral there are the grave-diggers who,
621 traditionally among the Nyakyusa, were mature men, relatives or
village neighbours.¹ They wash after the burial and are rewarded
with a special leg of the funeral beef. As we have seen, the affines
(shato), that is the fathers-in-law and sons-in-law of the deceased
or of 'the owner of the funeral', come with cattle to kill or cloth.
When a woman dies, her husband and her father, or her brother,
kill cattle, and their affines bring cloths or, occasionally, cattle.
Kinsmen—members of the lineage and their wives—and neigh-
bours bring gifts of food to cook for the crowd of mourners, and
small gifts of millet which are presented to the shade and used for
making the ritual beer. After an abnormal birth, village neigh-
bours have their legs splashed with scalding medicine but do not
845 drink medicines or shave. The cattle of the village are also
621 splashed. At the puberty ritual the bride's maids keep her com-
pany during her seclusion. The co-wives and neighbours of her
881 mother and mother-in-law assist in instructing her, and the neigh-
621 bours of her father join with him first in avoiding her and then in
602 giving her gifts. Her father-in-law is identified with his brothers
and his father's brothers' sons, whom she avoids, as well as his
sisters, and her mother-in-law's brothers, and sisters' husbands.
They, in turn, avoid her sisters, as well as herself.

621 By the 'congregation' we mean those who attend rituals to ex-
789 press sympathy, and whose presence is felt to be necessary to the

¹ In Ngonda they are shato, cross-cousins.

meat is offered in the bride's father's grove; the two symbols of first intercourse—treatment with *andamila* medicine and jumping over fire; the recognition of the end of childhood by calling on the bride's mother to put her down off her back; the insistence that she show modesty before her father and his fellows as before a father-in-law; and the taboo on crossing water lest her menstrual flow become like a river.

The twin ritual is characterized by the fear of infection from too great potency, and the treatment with scalding medicines to 'burn' the twin birth.

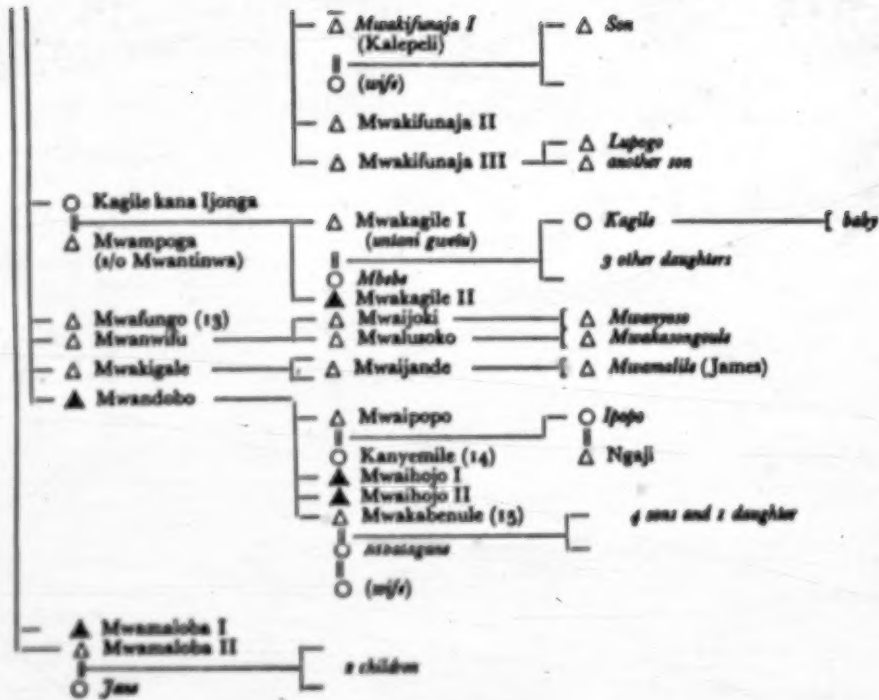
Sometimes our informants gave different interpretations of the same symbol and there was no agreement between them, as with the stem of bananas stolen in the Kukwe death ritual, and the bunch of flowers brought back from the stream. Nvani said stealing the bananas symbolized that 'we may now eat other people's food', and Mwamulenga that it was a symbol of driving away disease. Kakuse, the doctor, interpreted the bunch of flowers brought back from the stream as a symbol of the shade which was brought home; Mwamulenga saw picking and carrying flowers as yet another symbol of the actions of a madman. Though there was general agreement over the interpretation of many symbols, it is possible that some have no commonly accepted meaning, but suggest different things to different people. It is clear, however, that with the Nyakyusa, as with ourselves, one symbol has often several associations for the same person, and Kasitile and the more self-conscious of our informants were aware of this. For Kasitile the banana in the death ritual is the corpse and the pumpkin-seeds in it the shade; it is also faeces which madmen eat; it is also, in the puberty ritual, the male organ and the seeds are the semen. Eating a banana is a symbol both of copulation and of the actions of a madman. Conversely, the same object or action is symbolized in many different ways—there are nine or ten symbols of sex intercourse, and twenty of driving away the shade, recorded in the texts quoted above.

When an action recurs in different rituals, informants almost always interpreted it in the same way in each context: the exception was the trampling dance (*shaleya igaye*) interpreted as a way of 'driving away the shade' in the death ritual and a 're-joining' in the puberty ritual. It was always explained as 'customary'. 'Father and grandfather did it.'

This brings us to the ultimate explanation given for all the

Nyakyausa

- (13) Living at a distance, so did not come
to induction.
(14) Inherited by Mwakabende.
(15) He lives near the father of the twins.

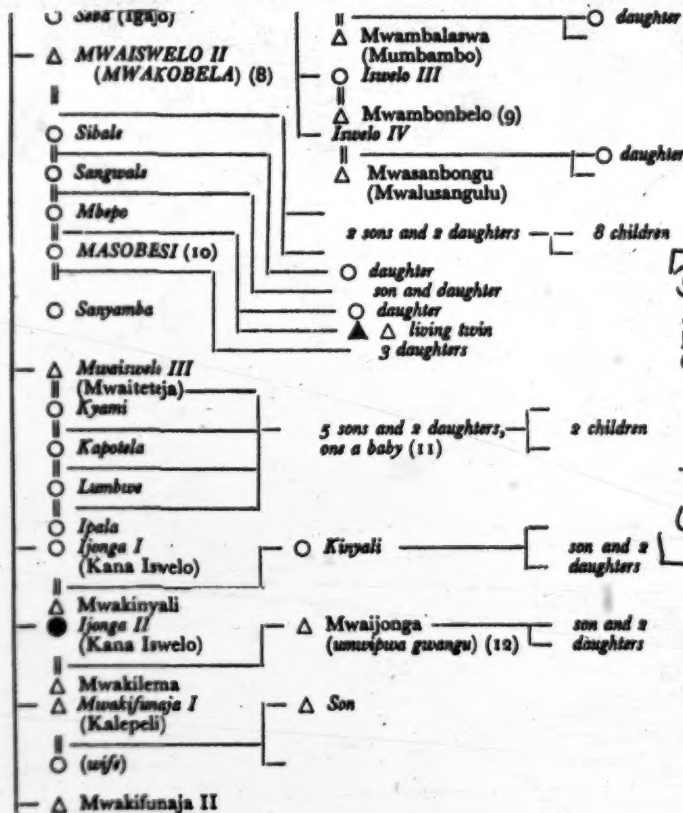


[facing p. 270(A)]

Key:
Persons participating in the ritual shown
in italics.
△ ○ = alive. ▲ ● = dead.

NOTES:

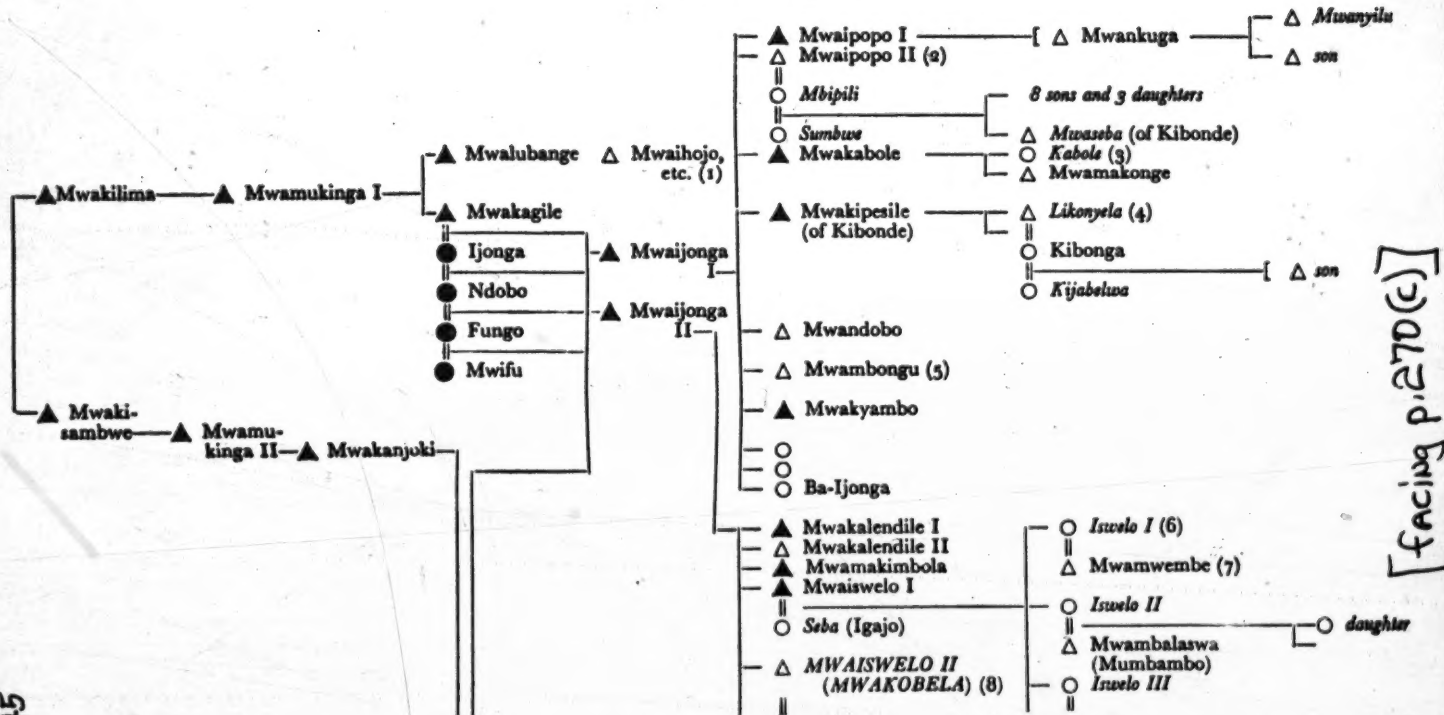
- (1) Do not come.
- (2) 'Owner' of the ritual.
- (3) Took medicine.
- (4) At home of brother of mother of twins.
- (5) Moved to Mwipande.
- (6) Sick for 'washing'.
- (7) Chief at Masoko.
- (8) Father of the twins.
- (9) Clerk at Tukuyu.
- (10) Mother of the twins.
- (11) The third daughter is 'a wanderer with no home'.
- (12) He left children and went away. He himself had twins before.
- (13) Living at a distance, so did not come to induction.
- (14) Inherited by Mwakabenule.
- (15) He lives near the father of the twins.



[Facing p. 270 (B)]

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**GENEALOGY OF MWAKOBELA
(TWIN RITUAL)**



[facing p. 270(c)]

Konde Children

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air, as much privacy as possible being secured in the ⁸⁴⁴ universal banana groves : and always in a sitting, not a lying position.

A difficult birth is a serious misfortune for the ⁸⁴⁵ mother. Births are normally easy, and difficult labour indicates the wrath of the spirits ⁷⁸² for evil done. Medicine is in all cases given to facilitate delivery, and if this fails other means must be tried. A message is sent to the husband and the father of the woman, and prayer, without ceremony, for the matter is urgent, is offered by both men :

“Ye fathers and ancestors, and ye who are of the far past, let this child be born safely. If I have sinned, be merciful ; and if ye will not be merciful, kill me, but let the woman and the child live.”

While thus praying he has been chewing the pith of a banana leaf, and at the end he takes water into his mouth, which he squirts out, saying, “Let my sin be carried away,” and throws on the roof the chewed pith ; for if he is not by birth the representative of the family he has no natural right to pray, but the ceremony of chewing and throwing on the roof averts evil consequences.

If all this fails it is clear that the woman has sinned ; ⁸⁴⁵ and her only hope of life for herself and her child ⁷⁸³ lies in confession. The midwife takes a number of small sticks which she throws on the ground one by one, inviting the suffering woman to name the men with whom she has consorted. Natives assert emphatically that birth becomes easier after confession ;

- 845 and the statement cannot be altogether devoid of
783 truth. The influence of the mind upon the body is
universally admitted: may it not be that the con-
sciousness of guilt has the effect of contracting the
muscles, and the relaxation which follows confession
renders birth less painful? And may it not be that
even a false confession, wrung from a despairing
sufferer, brings a momentary relief sufficient to bring
the child to the birth? One is glad to add, however,
that many women have the courage to refuse altogether
to submit to this shameful ordeal, insisting that their
trouble is due, not to the wrath of the spirits, but to
other causes, and that they will die rather than confess
what is not true.

- 844 When birth has taken place, the cord is cut with a
bamboo knife, and the placenta buried in the family
846 place of prayer, a small part protruding to leave a con-
nection which insures further children. All this time
no one in the house may swallow saliva. The father
calls out to know the sex of the child, but he must not
yet enter (for the party have entered the house as
soon as possible after the birth). After a few days
the mother is anointed with oil and shaved, along with
her child, and powdered with medicine. Meantime
intimation has been sent to the grandparents; a cock
if a boy, a hen if a girl, telling them all that they wish
to know. The mother may now resume her household
duties.

- 851 But in about a week she goes to show the child to
603 her own parents, and at the end of her visit, which
431 lasts some weeks, great preparations are made by both

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Konde Children

846 earlier days. The family of Lugulu at Mwakeleli wear blinders of leaves for weeks after a birth. At the end of the period a feast of beer and ill-cooked food is prepared, and both sets of families spend the night in open reviling of each other, and ceaseless tramping of the feet the livelong night. In the morning good food is eaten, and both parties go their ways with mutual good will. This is called *ukutula indila*, to fear the fears; to endure the terrors. No explanation of what the terrors are has reached me.

845
783 The birth of twins is regarded as one of the greatest of misfortunes, and is followed by ceremonies intended to cleanse the parents from the stain which has come upon them, and to prevent its spread to others. A hut is built outside the village, with a partition in the middle, on either side of which the parents live, but they must speak to each other only in whispers, and to others not at all. The doctor sprinkles all the relatives with medicine, and kindles a fire, in the smoke of which every one must stand for a moment. The parents are shut up in the hut, but may leave it for a few moments at night, and no one may see them. After about a month the doctor comes again, with beating drums and shaking rattle, and brings the parents out of their house of restraint. A second sprinkling of medicine upon each relative being made, the doctor takes a bunch of grass from the roof, kindles it, and hands it to the father, who, holding it in one hand, crawls out of the house, and runs, followed by the crowd. He returns, however, and receives their

Konde Children

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salutations with his hand upon his mouth. Beer mixed with medicine is handed to him, and, all the others drinking one by one from a calabash, he takes a little into his mouth and squirts it upon each as he or she drinks. The final stage comes about a month later, when, in the presence of the doctor, without whom nothing can be done, all the grandparents and both parents drink beer amid a circle of shouting villagers, and then, laying hold of the calabash, break it in pieces. After one more sprinkling of all, the doctor departs, taking with him a cow as fee for his many exertions. But until another child is born, the parents must eat alone, or with other parents of twins; and the mother may not pass behind anyone without warning them and receiving their consent, signified by clapping the hands.

The naming of the child. The Konde child possesses a varied selection of names. When he is grown he will offer a European employer one or another, sometimes in perfect honesty, sometimes with intent to hide the fact that under a previously given name he had a bad character. But the names are all genuine. Descent is through the father, and the new-born child takes the personal name of its paternal grandfather, let us say Ambangire. But his mother must never refer to her father-in-law by name, nor may she use the name in referring to any other person who bears it; her son therefore takes her own name; if she is called Kalukwa, he will be named Mwakalukwa; next he takes the family name of his father, say Mwakasungula.

Things Forbidden 107

for her where she is, or at any rate at a distance from 595
his own house.

Twins are among the greatest of misfortunes ; and 845
along with twins are counted children born feet first. 784
This subject is dealt with separately, and it needs
only to be noted that parents are segregated, must
not speak even to each other except in whispers,
must not drink milk, lest the cow should dry up, or
give only water. The mother must not pass behind
anyone without asking for permission, which is given
by clapping hands ; nor may she pass her own father
without a ceremony in which she throws dust over
his head. This goes on until another child is born, or
until about five years have elapsed.

It is *mwiko* for a dog to drink the milk of a cow that 784
has recently calved ; the cow will dry up. The same
result will follow if strangers go into the house while
cows are being milked. It is forbidden to common
people to eat new season's food until chiefs and
village headmen and twins have eaten first ; and even
they eat only when the first fruits have been mixed
with medicine by the doctor. The first fish of the
season must not be taken to the village. It is eaten
at the river by the boys. It belongs to the spirits.
To make a sucking noise with the lips is *mwiko*, being
a token of impudence ; it may also lead to accusation
of witchcraft. Never steal from a blacksmith ; the
scraps of iron you steal will produce a noise in your
throat like the noise of his bellows, and presently you
will die.

For a man to see his daughter-in-law, no matter 606

NORTH NYASA REGION

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witches, who use their power beneficently and spend their dreams in efforts to counter-act the aggressor witches, *awalosi*, who use their power maliciously. The great commoner is the strongest of the former type, and the 'defender of the village'. A man who earns universal unpopularity is subject to a spiritual attack from the 'defenders', and is liable to fall sick from the blast of unpopularity. Belief in this efficacy of the 'breath of men' is one of the sanctions of the accepted social order.¹

Only magic is believed to have power to punish wrongdoers who are neither kinsmen nor members of the same chiefdom. Magic exerts an influence on the behaviour of kinsmen and affines. The witchcraft of a neglected wife may cause a man to fall sick, or that of his father-in-law may harm his children.² The power of witchcraft never acts between relatives, though it might between husband and wife.³

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An aggressor witch was reported in the old days by the great commoner to the chief, who ordered the poison ordeal. If the accused failed to vomit (the dose was seldom fatal), he was proved guilty and killed or exiled, all his cows and property being taken by the chief and the victims of his aggressive witchcraft. If a private individual accused another, both were put to the ordeal; if both vomited, the accuser had to pay two cows to the other for slander; if either failed to vomit he was punished as guilty. The ordeal is now illegal, but men accused of aggressive witchcraft still find it best to fly the chiefdom. Great commoners normally used their witchcraft powers to protect their chief from attack, but if he erred they would join in the attack on him; the nobles of Ngonde had power to exert a similar constitutional check on the Kyungu.⁴

763
If death by aggressive witchcraft was suspected, it was proved or disproved by a routine post-mortem examination and by subsequent consultation with the diviner.⁵

BIRTH

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851
A child should be born in its own father's house. A difficult birth is a sign of the guilt of adultery, and is eased by confession.⁶ A few days after the birth the mother is anointed, shaved, and resumes her household duties. She later goes on a visit of some weeks to show the child to her own parents, returning to her husband after celebration by both sets of grandparents, and exchanges of food and hoes. The birth of twins was a great misfortune, requiring the segregation and ritual purification of both parents.⁷

INITIATION

881
There was no puberty or initiation rite for boys. The initiation of a girl was really a pre-marriage rite. She went through a complicated rite to ensure fertility, in which the husband took part. The initiation lasts some months, and includes several exchanges of food between the families of the girl and her betrothed husband, and ceremonies in which her girl friends of the same village and his friends of his village take part. The girl is tested for virginity during the ceremonies. If she is not betrothed before puberty the initiation is carried out in a modified form, but the full significance is lost.⁸

¹ Wilson, 2, 1936, p. 277.² Ibid., 3, 1939, p. 38.³ Ibid., p. 256.⁴ Ibid., 1, 1936, p. 91.⁵ Johnson, 1897, p. 443.⁶ Wilson and Hunter, 1939, p. 10; Machensie, 1925, pp. 42-3.⁷ Ibid., pp. 44-8. According to H. H. Johnson, if the children died in succession the father was expected to kill himself, but it is possible that he is recounting a custom of the Southern Tumbuka (1897, p. 417).⁸ Ibid., 1925, p. 51; Wilson and Hunter, 1939, p. 11; Wilson, 2, 1936, p. 258.

SACRIFICES AT THE GROVES OF CHIEFS

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may nullify any ritual, but often it is not strong enough to overcome the fimpitous tendencies of the lineage. In theory a celebration at the grove of a senior should precede that at the grove of a junior and sacrifices at Lubaga would be followed by sacrifices at the groves of the 'sons of Lwembe' in order of seniority, but this does not happen in practice nowadays and we doubt whether it ever did, since a hierarchy was not organized and maintained by a central authority as in Ngonde. In 1935 a celebration at the grove of Mwaijonga (82) preceded one at the grove of his great-grandfather Mwakiambwe (30) by a month, as we shall see.

Sacrifices are made when a drought or flood occurs, or a plague of locusts, or an epidemic among men or cattle; when fishing is poor in the chiefdoms of the plain, or war is imminent. They occur most often during the 'winter' in the hills, when a malaria-sodden people feel the chill of damp mists and cool south winds, and in October, just before the break of the rains, when the country is parched; but they are not confined to these periods. In theory the village headmen and the priests who 'watch over the country' foresee coming misfortune in dreams, and avert it by making the appropriate sacrifices. And they are helped by ordinary people who are dreaming repeatedly or falling into a trance or fit, and prophesying evil and jabbering of 'a black cow, a black cow' or some other appurtenance of sacrifice. But in practice the prophesies generally occur when there is hunger or plague in the land, or an omen (such as a python or a ground hornbill behaving oddly) has been seen.

The dreamers are *abasololi* or *abakunguluka*, and, as these names indicate, they are believed to have descended into the land of the shades. *Ukusoloka*¹ means to go down into something, like the roots of a tree into the earth, and *ukukungula ingungula* means to pluck a banana flower which (as was shown in *Rituals of Kinship*) is a symbol for a corpse and is buried; so the *abakunguluka* are those who have been buried in the earth. '*Abakunguluka* go to the land of the shades and return. . . . An *ukunguluka* plucks up the "blessed grass" (*ikisajelo*) in his swept courtyard and goes beneath and sees. . . . He goes down into the earth beneath and takes the chief to the land of the shades when he dies, and he also sees the witches. . . .' More rarely, the *usololi* or *ukunguluka* is

¹ *Ukusoloka*—a breach presentation, the implication being that the infant's head is in *kyaga*, but children born in this way are not necessarily prophets.

² cf. Monica Wilson, *Rituals of Kinship*, pp. 77, 212.

²⁷⁹⁵
^{x 797}
 [361] expresses the unity of groups of believers who associate in Churches. But the two systems are not wholly exclusive: the Christian still belongs to a lineage and a chiefdom, though he does not worship as a member of either, and thereby impairs their solidarity.

(b) THE CHRISTIAN WITHDRAWAL

What is the attitude of Christian converts to the rituals performed by their pagan kinsmen and neighbours and what replaces the traditional pagan rituals in the Christian community? These questions have already been touched upon in the accounts of pagan rituals, but we must now consider them more fully.

[764] Christians withdraw very largely from the pagan rituals of kinship which, as was shown in a previous book, are directed to the shades. They attend the funerals of pagan kinsmen to weep and comfort the mourners, and they often undertake the work of grave-digging so fearful to pagans, but they take no part in the 'farewell to the dead' nor do the stricter among them eat of the funeral meat, since the cattle killed are an offering to the shades.

• [645] Christians do not participate in the twin ritual which brings together such a large number of pagan kinsmen, nor do they share in the puberty ritual, and they forbid their daughters to keep a pagan bride company during her seclusion. For the most part their withdrawal is accepted tolerantly by their pagan kin who carry on without them, a pagan father even performing the 'farewell to the dead' for a Christian son who has died, lest his lineage shades be angered by the omission, but occasionally the non-participation of

[585] Christians leads to strained relations, as when pagans refuse to visit or eat with a bride or a remarried widow who has not celebrated with them after her union with her husband, and sometimes a Church member, under pressure from pagan relatives or driven by his own fears, celebrates the ritual for a pagan father. The

[645] dropping of the elaborate twin ritual creates surprisingly little difficulty considering how much the pagans fear sickness from twins. Their birth is interpreted by Christians as a special blessing—a bounteous increase—rather than 'an illness' as the pagans call it. A Christian woman, asked if a mother of twins was not fearful when the ritual was omitted, gave a classic reply: 'What she thinks in her heart I can't see; what I think in my heart you can't see; but we do see that no one avoids her when they meet her face to face.'

^x 797 there?" And after he went there was much food.' In fact, it
[^] 795 appears that he took the teachers and schoolchildren to the grove
 [796] that they might no longer be afraid of it: the girls gathered fire-
 wood there, and everyone entered and made a noise, thus breaking
 great taboos. But all this happened long ago (the visit to Mbyanga
 was in 1913 or 1914) and, as was indicated earlier, the common
 view among Christians is that pagan rituals used to be necessary
 and efficacious, but are so no longer. We were assured by Chris-
 tians who themselves took no part in twin rituals that 'formerly
 [845] people fell ill if they did not celebrate'. 'Yes, of course, they were
 [753] very sick indeed in the old days, the whole body would swell.'
 Some even maintained that it was still necessary for pagans to
 celebrate though not for Christians. A Christian chief explained:

[778] The sacred grove of Mwakibaha is just here in my country; . . . in
 [789] the old days they used to take a little fresh milk and an unripe stem of
 bananas, and put them in the grove. . . . The next day the calabash
 was full of milk and the stem was ripe. This was really so in the old
 days, Kyala heard men and agreed to their requests in this way. We
 went to ask for rain and food in the groves; the chief would kill a cow
 and Kyala agreed, food and rain came. Now that the Gospel has
 spread, since the Europeans have opened the Gospel to us Kyala
 refuses to agree, he says: 'Since they are proud and refuse to hear the
 Gospel I will discipline them', and he refuses to agree to the old ways.

QUESTION: What about witchcraft?

[854] Perhaps there were people who were witches in the old days; at any
 rate I know that when milk ran short and a man was accused to the
 chief of bewitching the cattle, the chief used to take his cattle and drive
 him out of the country, and then milk was plentiful again. Of that I
 am sure.

QUESTION: And now?

No, it is not like that now.

[698] Many pagans attribute the decline in fertility which is taking
 place, and the decrease in the yield of milk, to the decay of the
 old communal rituals and the unhampered activities of witches.

Nevertheless, as the number of Christians in an area increases,
 the pagans tend to curtail their rituals more and more. The
 direct parallel between pagan confusion, sacrifice, and com-
 munion with the shades, and the Holy Communion of the
 Christian Church is recognised by many, and one is felt to replace
 the other. Regarding the rituals of kinship we were repeatedly
 told: 'We see that the Christians, who say the only rituals are the

TWENTY YEARS' CHANGE

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was not an individual one. True, a girl gave her formal consent in the marriage ritual, but the pressure on her to accept the husband selected for her by her kinsmen was almost irresistible. In the thirties Christian women who refused their husband's heir and lived alone, or married an unrelated man of their choice, were regarded by their pagan sisters as very daring, and little girls in pagan families took it as a matter of course that they should replace their dead sisters; today the right of a widow to choose whom she will marry is generally accepted, and the custom of replacing a dead woman by her sister has lapsed. 'Every girl wants her own husband nowadays', the old women say. Thus lineage obligations give way to individual freedom of choice in marriage. At the same time the rituals which emphasised the lineage are dropped or modified. The fearful fecundity of a double birth no longer appals men and the twin ritual which used to bring together all the living members of a lineage of three generations is not celebrated at all. At a puberty ritual a pagan girl may be given the *lipili* medicine, the symbol of 'the blood of the lineage' by her mother, but there is no seclusion and elaborate feasting, no sacrifice of the bull of puberty that her father's shades may 'move aside a little' to make way for the shades of her husband's lineage. Only at a funeral do kinsmen still gather and celebrate, for many still fear the shades, and at a funeral the heir is installed and the importance of property and the inheritance of it has not diminished one whit. As we have seen, the traditional religion was formulated in terms of kinship; the gods were senior kinsmen; but today God, *Kyala*, is no ancestor; to pagans as well as to Christians he is separate and supreme. Men are still classified by their lineages, and one of the topics of village questions is how Prince Charles can be heir to the British throne when his father is not of the house of Windsor; but already in the economic field, and increasingly in the religious, it is the family of parents and children which is now dominant, not the lineage.

Divorce is far more frequent than formerly, partly because women claim a greater freedom of behaviour than before, as well as the right of choosing their own husbands, and are supported by the courts. As one village headman put it, 'Formerly a father beat his daughter with a stick if she ran home and sent her back to her husband who also beat her.' The women reject the old pattern of subservience which was expressed in crouching to greet a man, and addressing him in a very deferential fashion; the men observe, and